

# **Dr. Elaine Phillips, Introduction to Biblical Studies, Session 11, Asia Minor and Greece**

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This is Dr. Elaine Phillips and her teaching on Introduction to Biblical Studies. This is session 11, Asia Minor and Greece.

At this point, we are moving far outside the land between.

We've been spending our time there, and we're going to try to take in the Eastern Mediterranean. Now, it goes without saying that the focus is going to be a lot broader at this point.

What we really want to do is look at the Book of Acts and particularly focus on the journeys of Paul, first, second, and third missionary journeys, as we can see them in some of the places where they're significant. There are, however, also the first three chapters of Revelation that we want at least to visit a little bit and look at some of the sites that are germane in that area. So, Asia Minor and Greece is sort of an overview way of saying the kinds of things we're going to be looking at.

Obviously, we need to do our usual focus on a map. And so, this is one we're now very familiar with. We have been spending a lot of time here.

Now, you will remember that from Caesarea—it's not on this map, but it's just below where it says Megiddo—the gospel goes forth. And the gospel is going to go forth to our area of what we know as modern-day Turkey, well beyond into what we know as Greece, and then finally to Rome. In terms of geography, we want first to note that here is Anatolia.

When we've been talking about land between before, lots of our focus was on various empires here in Mesopotamia or the Egyptian dynasties down in this context. We didn't spend a lot of time talking about Anatolia, but now we do want to zero in just a little bit more on, again, broad brush geographical description. And then noting that there are some empire names here, we want simply to make a couple of historical notes about Hittites and about Koreans.

So, that's the kind of thing that we're going to do for the next couple of minutes. I want to start with the bodies of water that surround this area of Anatolia right here. You can see the central Anatolian plateau.

Obviously, this is the Mediterranean Sea. I don't need to define that for us. But let's get some of the others because they do show up, especially in terms of things that need to be crossed or gone around when Paul and others are traveling.

So here, first of all, separating the western shore of Asia Minor from what turns out to be Greece or Elos is going to be the Aegean Sea. That's important. The second thing we want to note is the Hellespont, basically bridge to Elos.

Bridge to Elos, and that's going to be right here. If you know your history, more recent history in terms of some of the major battles that have been fought, you know the tragic things that happened at Gallipoli and the Dardanelles. But we're not going in that direction now.

We also have the Sea of Marmara, a small little body of water there. We have the Bosphorus Straits here, and then finally, the Black Sea up here. So, significant in terms of those bodies of water that surround the south, Mediterranean, west, and then north of Anatolia.

Let's get a little bit in terms of the topography using the same map but now focusing on land masses. To the north, we have the Pontic Mountains. Remember the term Pontus is appearing several times in the New Testament, so we have our Pontic Mountains along the northern coast.

We have another range of mountains here, the Taurus Mountains, both south and then also east to a degree as well. In the center is our upper raised plateau area. And then just a couple more things.

Mount Ararat and other mountains will also be present. And then, just a note in terms of rivers, sort of like the Nile on a smaller scale, our major rivers drain either north or to the west, and these are going to be significant here, especially in terms of some of the cities that we're going to talk about in a moment.

So, we've got both water bodies around this area and then topography. Let's do a little bit in terms of the kind of history and, again, just briefly, the history of the people groups and empires to a degree that either controlled this area or certainly used it as a corridor. We want to think about it as being a corridor as well.

So, our first group is the Hittite Empire. Now, we've encountered the term Hittites when we've talked about the confrontations, especially between Egypt and the Hittites, because you may remember that we have Hittite treaties that were made. Neo-Hittites are going to be important here; Hittite treaties with Egypt, some of those being very significant in terms of our understanding of treaty forms and covenant forms.

That's another lecture altogether. But notice those dates, especially a flourishing from about 1400 to 1200, which has some very interesting people of Israel covenant-

making connections. The second bullet, we have a number of people groups, Phrygia, Thrace, and Old Assyrian Empire.

There's a tumultuous time here. Just note something. About five lectures ago, I'm sure we all remember that, I made a note that about 1200 BC, there was something going on in this area that we don't completely understand.

It brought about the demise of the Late Bronze Period, cataclysmic stuff. And notice that that date is showing up here, too, in terms of the cessation of this and some difficulties for some time. Following that, we have a group called the Hurrians.

They seem to have migrated in from other areas. That's no surprise. This happens a lot in these places where you have a constant movement of people to territory that feels more hospitable or wealthier, etc.

Noting clashes with the Hittites, so if you go back in your mind to that first map, you see both the names Hittite and Hurrian in that Anatolian area. Those are the two that, if anything, we want to keep in mind in terms of parallels with the history of the Old Testament period. Moving farther along chronologically, one of the things we see in the latter part of the Old Testament, notably those names that come up as Persian rulers, are important in terms of sending the people of Israel, sorry, the Jews, back to their land, we see Darius and Xerxes.

But they're not only important in terms of those biblical narratives, but as we read Herodotus, the historian Herodotus, we see that they are going to use this whole Anatolia area as a corridor to move to Greece and all the incredible confrontations that took place in that area. The direction flips, and later on, starting with Philip of Macedon and, of course, Alexander the Great, the direction across Anatolia is going to go from west to east. First, the Greeks, followed later by the Romans as they slowly, slowly made their way across Anatolia to try and conquer the whole Levant, the eastern border of the Mediterranean, and well beyond. That's a quick overview of history.

Let's get now some regions as they appear in the first century, particularly regions and provincial names. We'll come back to cities in a moment, and I'm not going to put any arrows or circles on the map because, thankfully, these are labeled. So here we see the island of Cyprus, significant in terms of Paul's first missionary journey, so we'll come back to that.

We also see Galatia labeled right in here. There's been some discussion in the past in terms of what exactly were the boundaries of Galatia, but I will not engage in that discussion at this point. We want to notice Asia, and we're going to remember that on Paul's second missionary journey, he was prevented from going into Asia, which is

going to push him across the Hellespont into what basically is eastern southern Europe.

Macedonia, this region here, and so we have Philippi named after Philip of Macedonia. We'll come back to those cities in a moment. Achaia is another name for Greece.

You'll notice Greece in parentheses, but Achaia is going to be our regional name at that point in time. And then, although it's not on here in print, the Peloponnesian Peninsula is this region right here, and Corinth, as you can see, coming back to cities in a moment, Corinth sits in a very strategic place between the Peloponnesian Peninsula and Greece or Achaia proper. That's, I should say, blurred or masked, that isthmus, by our label here, but obviously, if you have a large peninsula and a large land mass, the tiny little connecting thing is an extremely important bridge.

It's called an isthmus, and we will return to the cities on either side of that, Cenchreae and Achaia, and how important they, along with Corinth, are in terms of politics, religion, travel, commerce, et cetera. Let's do a little bit with cities now. Same map, and this time I'm going to have to put some of these cities on here that are not labeled on this map.

Starting from the east, we have Antioch in Syria. In case the print's a little bit fine, here it is. Antioch, also called Antioch on the Orontes.

There were, at this period of time, about 16 Antiochs. We know of two of them as we read biblical material; it's this Antioch. According to Acts chapter 11, the believers were first called Christians, and then there's an Antioch in Pisidia, Pisidian Antioch here.

But just think of them as being a whole bunch more as well, because obviously named after Antiochus, one of the dynastic names of these descendants of the Seleucid dynasty. Antioch in Syria that's the first one. Ephesus, you can see it right here.

That too, as we know, will be extremely important, not only as the recipient of one of Paul's letters but also as one of the churches in the book of Revelation and a place where he spent some time. We have Colossae, likewise, a recipient in one of the letters and a place of significance. Sardis is not on the map, but right about there.

As we think of this place as being a corridor, as we've mentioned, Sardis is one of those places that gets mentioned as Herodotus is talking about the Persians trying to move across this Anatolian plateau, get across the Hellespont, and then deal with Greece. So, Sardis is important in that sense. Troas, the arrow is going to indicate just about the location of Troas.

Paul will spend some time there, and it's from Troas that he will too, also will cross into Macedonia. Philippi, you can see right up there, we've mentioned that already, named after Philip, Alexander the Great's father. Just going a little bit to the west and south, we have Thessalonica, and just nearby, slightly south of Thessalonica, the city that is mentioned in the book of Acts, Berea.

We have those wonderful folks in Berea who search the scriptures because they want to know if what Paul is saying is true. So even as we're noting these cities, we're noting a very good grouping around the Aegean Sea, important places. Athens is not on the map, but just above where that arrow tip is, right? So, take Corinth and go a little bit to the northeast.

I didn't want to block out Corinth itself. Finally, the city of Corinth is strategically located on that isthmus, as I said. Obviously, as you look at that list of cities, we certainly have a lot to think about, especially about the book of Acts.

So, a quick note on how we want to think about a journey through the book of Acts. I think I've mentioned this already somewhere back in one of those lectures. I bet it was in conjunction with the site of Caesarea.

But as we read the book of Acts, the main focus there is to indicate how the gospel, empowered by the Holy Spirit, is going to go to the ends of the earth. And, of course, in the parlance of Luke, that means to Rome. And so therefore, this is going to be a description of the journey of the gospel in that direction.

Chapters 1 through 10 of Acts are going to deal with the gospel within the land. So, we've talked about some of this already. We've talked about Caesarea and Cornelius in Caesarea, Gentiles in the land.

We've talked about bits of Samaria and the Hellenistic Jewish communities. We've mentioned some of these things. But now, for our purposes, we want to move outside beyond the land.

Chapter 11, Antioch and Syria, just mentioned it. And, you know, sometimes that term Antioch, Antioch on the Orontes, Antioch in Syria, doesn't mean a whole lot to us.

But we need to realize that as Rome made its way into this whole eastern Mediterranean area, Antioch was actually where they were centered. Yes, the forest was the Roman capital in Galilee, but that was well-stratified under Antioch's control. Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman Empire after Rome and Alexandria.

So, we are talking about a major, major place. Herod the Great built some stuff there. Julius Caesar was very much involved in building areas of Antioch.

Antioch is a significant location. Here you have groups of believers who are first called Christians in that context. So, let's focus on Paul now, initially, with some of those cities in mind and what the Book of Acts is telling us.

After chapter 11's reference to the Christians, we have the first missionary journey to Cyprus and the churches in Galatia. We'll look at a map in a moment—two maps, in fact. That's not terribly expansive compared to the second and third journeys.

But at least they're going out beyond the land. Second, from Troas, they get that far through all of the Anatolian Plateau over to Troas and then cross into both Macedonia, past Thessalonica, Berea, down to Athens and Corinth. So, a much more expansive second missionary journey.

And then the third missionary journey is going to retrace some steps, but this time land in Ephesus for a good amount of time. You'll remember that I quoted a moment ago, originally part of that second missionary journey, Paul was prevented from going to Asia. Third missionary journey, he's certainly going to spend some time there.

And then after being arrested in Jerusalem and spending a couple of years in imprisonment in Caesarea Maritima, then he is transferred to Rome. And so the quote is, and so we went to Rome. In other words, to the ends of the earth, as 18 of Acts says.

Well, let's just check out the map and see what this does for us. They leave Antioch after a time of prayer. They go to Cyprus and then come up here and do just a little bit of a switch through Pamphylia and then into the cities that show up in this part of Galatia.

We do have the mention of Lystra, Derbe, Pisidian, Antioch, and Iconium, which is basically the first missionary journey. Here, as I said, we get much more expansive.

You'll remember we have a Jerusalem council. And then after the Jerusalem council, Paul and those with him are delivering letters. So, they go back and revisit these cities that they already know.

But then they do some fairly major travel beyond that. Again, prevented from going into Asia. So, kind of around it to a place called Troas.

Here's where they have this vision of the man from Macedonia. Some think it might be Luke who is calling them to come over. Therefore, they'll make their way around there and spend some time in Athens.

We'll look at Athens briefly in a moment. We'll spend some time in Corinth and then head back. Finally, we'll reach the end of the second missionary journey.

As they crossed from Asia proper, or sorry, I should say Anatolia proper, they crossed the Hellespont, as I've said, make their way to Macedonia and those cities. Athens and finally, these two cities that border the east and the west. Cenchreae on the east side of the Isthmus, Lycaeum on the west side.

By the way, there's a canal that goes across there now, which helps a lot in terms of not having to go around. I think the Romans were the ones who first attempted to do that. So, it does go back a ways.

Just some photographs to give us a little sense of the elegant, well, more than elegant, opulent, magnificent buildings. Here are the remains of the Forum at Philippi. So again, thinking of our trajectory of journeys after crossing the Hellespont.

Philippi, after that, will come Thessalonica and Berea. No pictures of those, but here is a sense of these columns that are left standing. They then make their way to Athens.

And oh, so much could be said about this, but we will not at this point. Simply note that we are talking about the Acropolis with the Parthenon and a whole set of entrances, the Propylaia here, the temple there, and a whole theater complex down here. So, this is a marvelous structure.

And this thing, which, of course, has been, well, sadly, they were storing munitions in there hundreds of years ago, so it blew part of it out. But imagine it as a whole structure at one point. I'll show you a smaller kind of version of that in a moment.

And then way off in the distance, brought a little closer by virtue of a telephoto lens, is La Cabitos with the church up on top. When he's in Athens, Paul will preach a very significant sermon. A sermon on the Areopagus or Mars Hill.

Standing up on that, you actually, these days when you're there can look at the whole city of Athens, huge population, and you can see a transcription in Greek of part of that Acts chapter 17 sermon where he is spinning off of an unknown god and will preach a wonderful sermon on how we can know that god. I want just to focus briefly from the position on top of that hill, now called Mars Hill, looking down into part of the forum, right about here, and a small little structure, popularly called the Theseion. I think it's a temple to Hephaestus, if I remember correctly.

But notice the structure. It's pretty much the same in a very miniature version of what the Parthenon would have been. Parthenon, by the way, standing for centuries.

I think we're talking about 5th-century construction. So, standing for centuries before Paul ever got there. And, of course, all the Athenian philosophical discourse and so forth going on in that context.

Corinth, we want just to take a quick look at this because we have in Corinth a major city down below, but then a necropolis up here, and so we have a worship going on in that place. This is a place called a bema, an elevated place, a podium, if you will, a large podium from which judgments might have been offered. And so, if you have someone, for example, maybe a proconsul whose name is maybe Galio, we have a reference to that in Acts chapter 18, issuing some kind of decree or some sort, probably from this public place where that sort of thing took place.

Temple of Apollo here, just another look at one of the many different things that are there. And then one of those fascinating finds archaeologically allows us to kind of set a dating grid for the events of the Book of Acts. We have in Acts chapter 18, a reference to him by name.

This inscription, which, by the way, is written in Greek, probably seems to be a copy or a transcription of an edict issued by the Roman emperor at that point in time. So that helps us a little bit. It's in six pieces if I remember correctly, but this helps us a little bit get a sense of the date: 5152 A.D. There is much more to say, but we need to keep trekking along with Paul into the third missionary journey.

So, this time, as we have Paul, he's going to revisit, revisit, and this time he's going to go to Ephesus. Now, there's been some interaction back and forth. If you read Acts chapter 18, you know that in his absence, we've had a guy named Apollos who was trained in Alexandria.

He's been there, so forth and so on, back to Corinth. But Paul will be in Ephesus. And then there are also some letters back and forth to Corinth.

I'm not going to get into all that correspondence that takes place there. Just look a little bit at Ephesus, because I want to mention a couple of things in conjunction with Acts chapter 19 and Paul's sojourn at Ephesus. Kiretos Street that's another name for priests, by the way.

And this seems to have been a processional street, the various and sundry religious things. There are all sorts of activities that would take place in terms of temples, fountains, et cetera, along this street. And then way down at the end of it is what was known as the library, Library of Celsus.



Ephesus, of course, was a huge population, and the estimates are that we have maybe, this is an estimate, something along the lines of 12,000 volumes stored in this particular library at this time. More important for us, that's just sort of tourists walking through these places, but more important for us is going to be the theater at Ephesus. And you may remember when we looked at the theater in Israel at Beit Shan, I suggested to you that the estimated attendance could be 7,000 and could accommodate about 7,000 people.

Here we are in the theater at Ephesus, and it's not the only one, but it is probably the biggest theater, which would have had seating, as you can read, for 24,000 people. So, this is a huge theater. And remembering that theaters were used as public gathering places, often used for propaganda, often used for political purposes.

And we have a gathering, of course, it's recorded in Acts chapter 19, of folks who are a little bit upset because their whole worship of Artemis has been pretty much undercut and subverted by the coming of the gospel. You can read that passage, Acts chapter 19, and the description of what's going on in this context. Another location that we can kind of move in Miletus is very close to where Ephesus is.

Another theater there. The mention of Miletus in Acts chapter 20 just helps us to kind of clue in on the location of that. This is the outside of the theater looking at it, but I want to focus on something else that was found in this theater.

And we're going to see, not terribly clearly, perhaps for some of us, but let me just suggest that if you read Greek, we can focus in on this word, which means and, right? And, and then this is of the, and here, take my word for it, Jews, of the Jews, and theosebeis here, of the God-fearers. And so, it seems, and then there's back over here is a word pretty, pretty hard to read, but it seems to be something about place. And so the suggestion is, amidst all the grass that's growing out of this and so forth, that we have carved into the seat a place for Jews and God-fearers.

However you want to interpret that, I'll let you do it on your own. That closes, as I said, this is fast, that closes down what we want to say in terms of first, second, and third missionary journeys and the increasing expansiveness of them. We want to just zero in on some of the churches of Revelation.

We'll start with a map, and I'll list the churches and locate them, and then we'll visit a few of them just briefly. We have Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum; read Revelation 1, chapter 3, and you'll remember, as you look through these, that these seven churches have different characteristics about them. I'm not going to talk about all of them, but I will mention a couple of them because some of the things that have been found in some of those churches do actually mesh with what John actually says in those first three chapters.

So, here's our map, just kind of noting them, and again, reminding ourselves of Asia, reminding ourselves of the Hellespont and crossing over. This map is thanks to Holy Land Photos, Carl Rasmussen. But we do have Ephesus here.

We have Smyrna, now Izmir, modern day Izmir. As we move up here, we have Pergamum, and we're going to spend just a little more time talking about Pergamum. We've already talked about Ephesus.

I won't say much more about Thyatira. I do want to comment and show a couple of pictures of Sardis. We will not go to Philadelphia, but we will visit Laodicea. I want you to note the map with regard to the location of Laodicea because just to the north of Laodicea is a place called Aepropolis, and just to the south and east is Colossae.

Just hang on to that for future reference. Mainly pictures, but pictures that connect a little bit here with what we read in the biblical text. The Trajanium, if you look at that, you'd probably say, oh, that must be after the emperor Trajan, and indeed it is.

The site of Pergamum was a tremendously significant site. By the way, huge library there as well. People think that perhaps this is where the idea of making parchment started.

So, Pergamum had a library that surpassed Ephesus' library by quite a bit. We also find, in addition to that Trajanium, an Asclepion. Do you remember our cult of Asclepius? We talked about the cult of Asclepius and artifacts from it that were found in the fortress of Antonia, just near the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

So here is a place for healing, and that whole cult of Asclepius practiced here as well in Pergamum. Here is one of our most interesting finds, because some folks suggest that this altar of Zeus, of which we see only the foundations, and ironically a tree growing out of it, might possibly be what was referenced when John was talking about Zeus and the altar of Zeus, Revelation Chapter 2, in conjunction with Pergamum. Moving quickly to Sardis.

Just two views of Sardis. Sardis, as you may remember the map, kind of north-ish, west-ish in the Anatolia area, and was really a major point, stopover point, on routes crossing Asia Minor and Turkey, Anatolia, and going west. So here we have another indication of a group that thought of themselves as extremely well protected.

There's the Acropolis back there. You can climb that Acropolis, and it feels as if it's completely impregnable. Down below, much larger city here, and one of the temples that was there.

Want to focus just a little bit more here, Hierapolis. You're saying, hey, no, wait a minute. I don't remember that name in terms of Revelation Chapters 1 through 3, and you don't, but there are hot springs here.

There was a spa, if you want to call it that, in antiquity here, as you would expect with hot springs, and you can actually, from afar, look at these and see the white and see the billowing stuff coming up. So here we are close up, but hang on to that and hang on to the idea of it being hot springs, and they are hot. Now let's go to Laodicea.

We are in a theater that hasn't been reconstructed, as you see, at Laodicea. Right back here are the hot springs of Hierapolis. That's rather interesting, standing here at Laodicea.

By the way, Laodicea is also a rather extensive site, so this is only one tiny window into it from the theater, but that's to the north, as we saw on our map. Now if you were to move kind of around, looking to mountains from the south, we have an aqueduct which brought water from those mountains to the south. If they're mountains, it's going to be cool water, spring water, maybe all water from a melt of ice, depending on the season.

So now you put together what I'm sure you're putting together as we're thinking about the condemnation of the church at Laodicea. You're neither hot nor cold. You're lukewarm.

I'm going to spew you out of my mouth. Here you have this site right in between the hot springs to the north and this potential for cool water. But by the time it gets to Laodicea, it's just sort of the murky stuff you would want to spit out of your mouth.

Well, here's what a completely unexcavated theater looks like. We are standing in a theater at Colossae, just to the east and a little bit south of Laodicea. These next couple of pictures have absolutely nothing to do with the biblical text, but they give us a little bit of a sense of the continuation of very, very elegant cultural things.

These were the things that our upper classes in Israel, in Jerusalem in the first century, the things that Herod tried to bring in culturally. They were the things that were always a temptation to Jews who were to worship God in a radically different way. But Herod would grab some of these architectural things, sometimes even conceptual things, as he restructured the temple. Here's a temple to Apollo at a place called Didyma.

Notice the monumental size of it. Notice the column bases that we have right here in columns in contrast to the size of the people. One more set of views of that.

Again, we are talking about something that was designed to overwhelm the populace with a place that represented their gods, and yet how empty those places were, how they have fallen down. So, we're going to close this just remembering that we started in Israel. We talked about Jerusalem.

Herod the Great brought cultural influence into Jerusalem, but none of those things remain. However, the kingdom of God continues and grows. There's always a contest between Jerusalem and Athens in terms of world views.

Here's our Athens view. With that, we stop.

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